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The Hosiery Wardrobe

A radio conversation between Miss Ruth Van Deman, and Mr. David H. Young, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, broadcast Tuesday, December 19, 1939, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 104 associate radio stations.

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WALLACE KADDERLY:

Keeping our regular Tuesday custom, here's Ruth Van Deman again to give us the news from the Bureau of Home Economics. And with her today is Mr. David Young. I think you said, Ruth, that Mr. Young is a hosiery specialist.....

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

Our very special hosiery specialist, Wallace. Mr. Young is the man who's designing, and styling the cotton stockings for the Bureau of Home Economics. He knows more in a minute about how hosiery is made than the rest of us can hope to learn in a lifetime.

DAVID YOUNG:

I've just been lucky....that's all. Designing fabrics for women's clothes has just happened to be my job. I've worked on the hosiery for only about 12 years.

KADDERLY:

Only about 12 years. If you were in radio work, Mr. Young, that would put you in the front rank of the pioneers.

VAN DEMAN:

Mr. Young has pioneered in hosiery design in more than one direction.

KADDERLY:

The two-way stretch at the top--, is that what you mean?

YOUNG:

No, I've worked more on the high twist for greater elasticity all over.

KADDERLY:

And the high splice at the heel?

VAN DEMAN:

Mr. Kadderly, you seem to know a thing or two about modern hosiery design yourself.

KADDERLY:

Right on my toes, .... absolutely.

VAN DEMAN:

Well, you're certainly tripping the light fantastic with your words today. But now, Mr. Young, if it isn't too much of a stretch of your imagination ..... that is, if you can think of hosiery not while it's being knitted in a mill but as it's being sold on a store counter, we'd appreciate some of your expert advice.

(over)

YOUNG:

Certainly. I'll be glad to help any way I can.

VAN DEMAN:

I don't know whether you ever buy stockings as gifts for the women in your family.

YOUNG:

Yes, very often.

VAN DEMAN:

What do you look for first?

YOUNG:

Well, first I try to think of how and when they're going to be worn. There's no use expecting a cobweb to give service on the golf course....any more than you'd want to wear tweed hose with your chiffon evening gown.

VAN DEMAN:

A hosiery wardrobe, I remember, that is your idea.--

YOUNG:

I think women would get better wear from their stockings if they'd conscientiously select certain kinds for certain purposes.

VAN DEMAN:

For example .....

YOUNG:

..... The 2- or 3-thread stocking belongs with dressy clothes ..... for evening wear and for afternoon parties. For more general dress purpose, a 4-thread 42- or 45-gauge holds up much better.

Or sometimes I buy Mrs. Young a 3-thread 51-gauge for a general-purpose stocking.

VAN DEMAN:

That's two types in your hosiery wardrobe....chiffon for evening wear, and a service sheer for street ....

YOUNG:

And I think most women need some for hard outdoor wear ..... (Pause) Again, if you don't mind my referring to my own family .....

VAN DEMAN:

It's always personal experience that tells the story.

YOUNG:

When Mrs. Young goes out in the garden, or takes the children out to play, she likes to wear cotton stockings. And on very cold days she prefers wool for warmth.

VAN DEMAN:

In other words .....cotton, wool, silk, synthetic .... all have their place in the well-planned hosiery wardrobe.

YOUNG:

Very definitely.

VAN DEMAN:

Now getting back to the hosiery counter in the store ..... that is, if we can elbow our way through the crowd. Shall we take a look at some of those general-purpose, 4-thread, were they?

YOUNG:

3- or 4- thread, depending on the gauge. The gauge, you know, is the number of needles used on the needle bar of the knitting machine. Fifty-one gauge means 51 needles to every 1-1/2 inches of the bar.

VAN DEMAN:

The higher the gauge the finer the stitches and the more of them.

YOUNG:

That's right. And "thread" means the number of strands of fiber twisted or laid together to make a yarn.

VAN DEMAN:

3-thread means three strands to the yarn ..... 4-thread four strands, and so on .....

YOUNG:

Yes, so on up to 7, 9, even 11.

VAN DEMAN:

Those would be for heavy duty, sure enough.

YOUNG:

But most American women want a stocking that's sheer and has a lot of elasticity. That's why we developed the high twist....to give a slenderizing effect.....great flexibility.....and more resistance to snags. The high twist is also a way of getting rid of luster mechanically. Of course I'm talking about silk now.

VAN DEMAN:

How can a person tell about that high twist in buying?

YOUNG:

I tell it by the feel of the fabric.

VAN DEMAN:

But you're an expert. You could probably select a good pair of stockings with your eyes shut.

YOUNG:

Oh no. I have to look at the texture and the reinforcements. (Pause)

By the way, the manufacturers have made great improvements in the way they reinforce sheer stockings. The machines now knit a toe within a toe ... a heel within a heel ... and a sole within a sole.



VAN DEMAN:

Shadow reinforcements, I call them.

YOUNG:

The same thing. One shades right into the next. It really gives three textures to the stocking fabric and distributes the strain.

VAN DEMAN:

Another improvement I've noticed is in the seam up the back. Stockings don't rip so often as they used to.

YOUNG:

A good stocking has 16 stitches or more per inch in the seam. And the seam doesn't pucker. Also the seam has to have a certain amount of "give." If you take a stocking in your hand and pull it gently along the seam, the seam should not be under special strain. (Pause)

And another way to tell whether the strain will come evenly on the back of a stocking is to look at the rows of little fashion marks.

VAN DEMAN:

The ones parallel with the seam?

YOUNG:

That's right ... those little marks show where the leg of the stocking was narrowed off. Each one of those fashion marks should be exactly opposite one on the other side of the seam.

VAN DEMAN:

What happens if they're skew-gee?

YOUNG:

The stocking isn't true. The pull and strain don't come evenly, and it's likely to wear out sooner and develop runs.

VAN DEMAN:

Mr. Young, do you suppose there'll ever be such a thing as a non-run stocking?

YOUNG:

We do have it in a non-run mesh now.

VAN DEMAN:

I mean in a plain knit.

YOUNG:

I never like to say it can't be done. But the mechanics of it are very difficult.

VAN DEMAN:

Well I knew that the modern stocking is a triumph of science over anatomy. But as I hear you talk my respect for it increases.

VAN DEMAN: (Cont'd)

And, Mr. Young, there's another question that I know many of our Farm and friends are just aching to have me ask you ... when are the Bureau of Home Economics cotton stockings going to get on the market?

YOUNG:

I hope I'll have the answer to that early in 1940. We're ready to release six of our designs for production.

VAN DEMAN:

That is good news.

KADDERLY:

We hereby invite you, Ruth, to bring Mr. Young back with you for a broadcast about the cotton stockings in 1940.

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